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Walter et al.

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(54) **PATIENT RECRUITMENT SYSTEM AND PATIENT RECRUITMENT METHOD**

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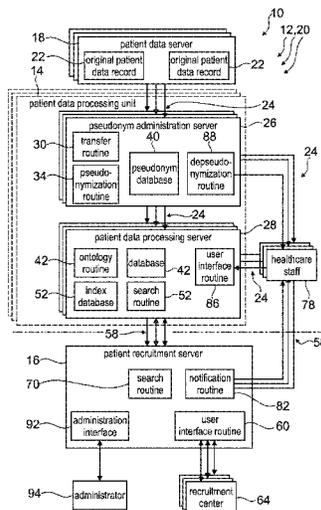
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(57) **ABSTRACT**
The invention is based on a patient recruitment system (10) having at least one patient recruitment server (16), which comprises at least one search routine (70) that is provided to search for patient data records (32) on the basis of recruitment characteristics (66). It is proposed that the patient recruitment server (16) comprises a notification routine (82) which is provided to send a recruitment notification (76) regarding at least one patient data record (32) found on the basis of the recruitment characteristics (66).

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9 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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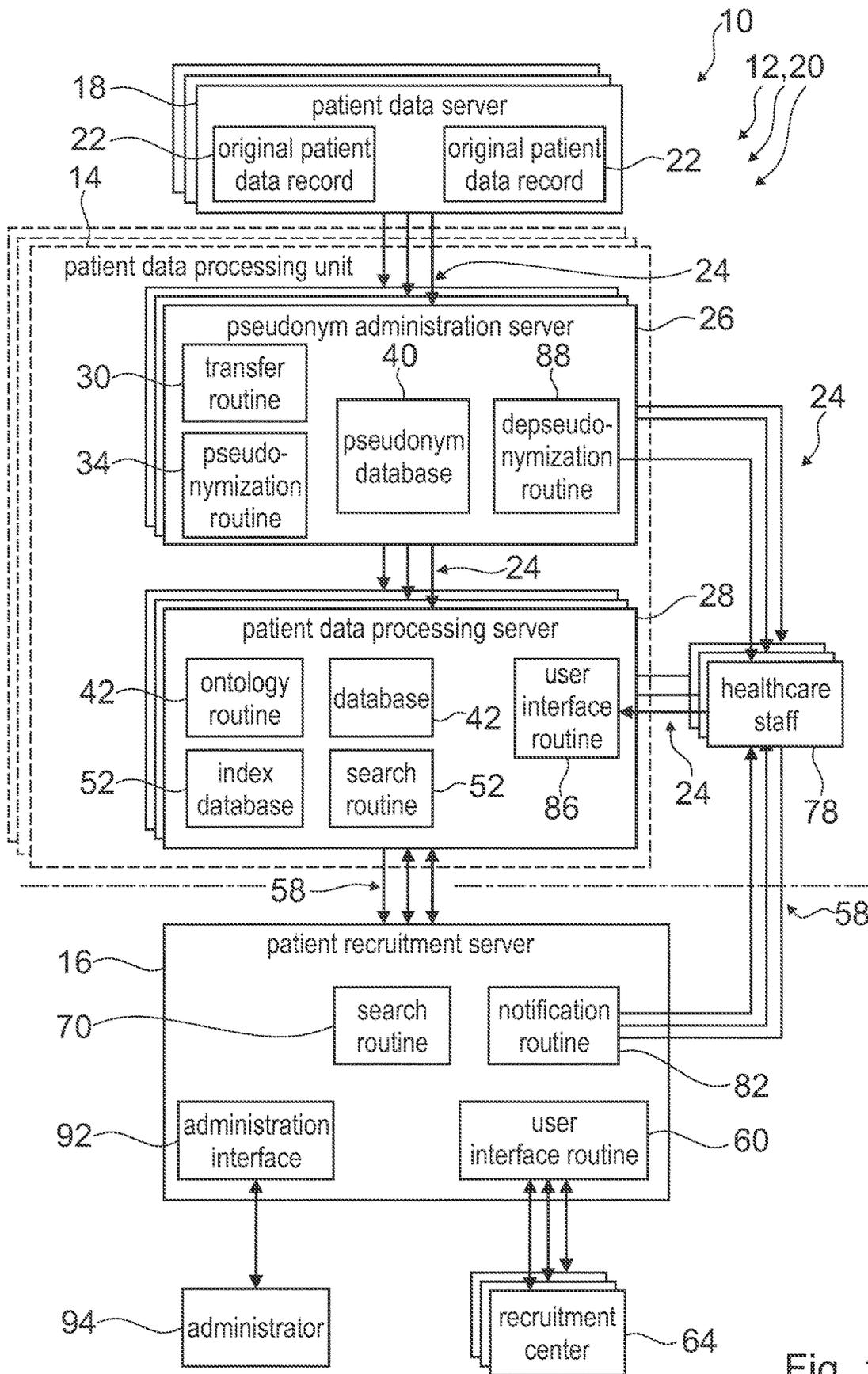


Fig. 1

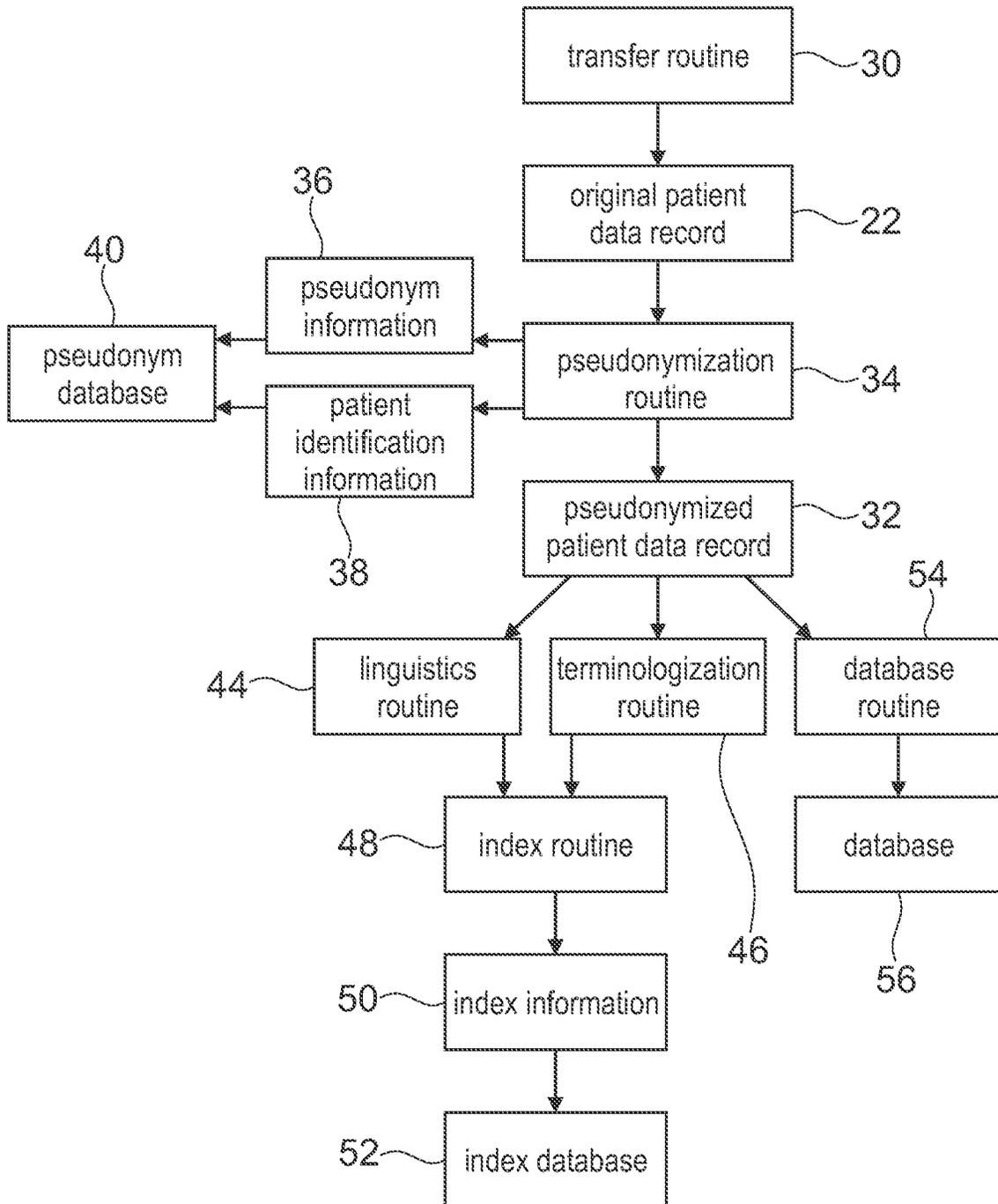


Fig. 2

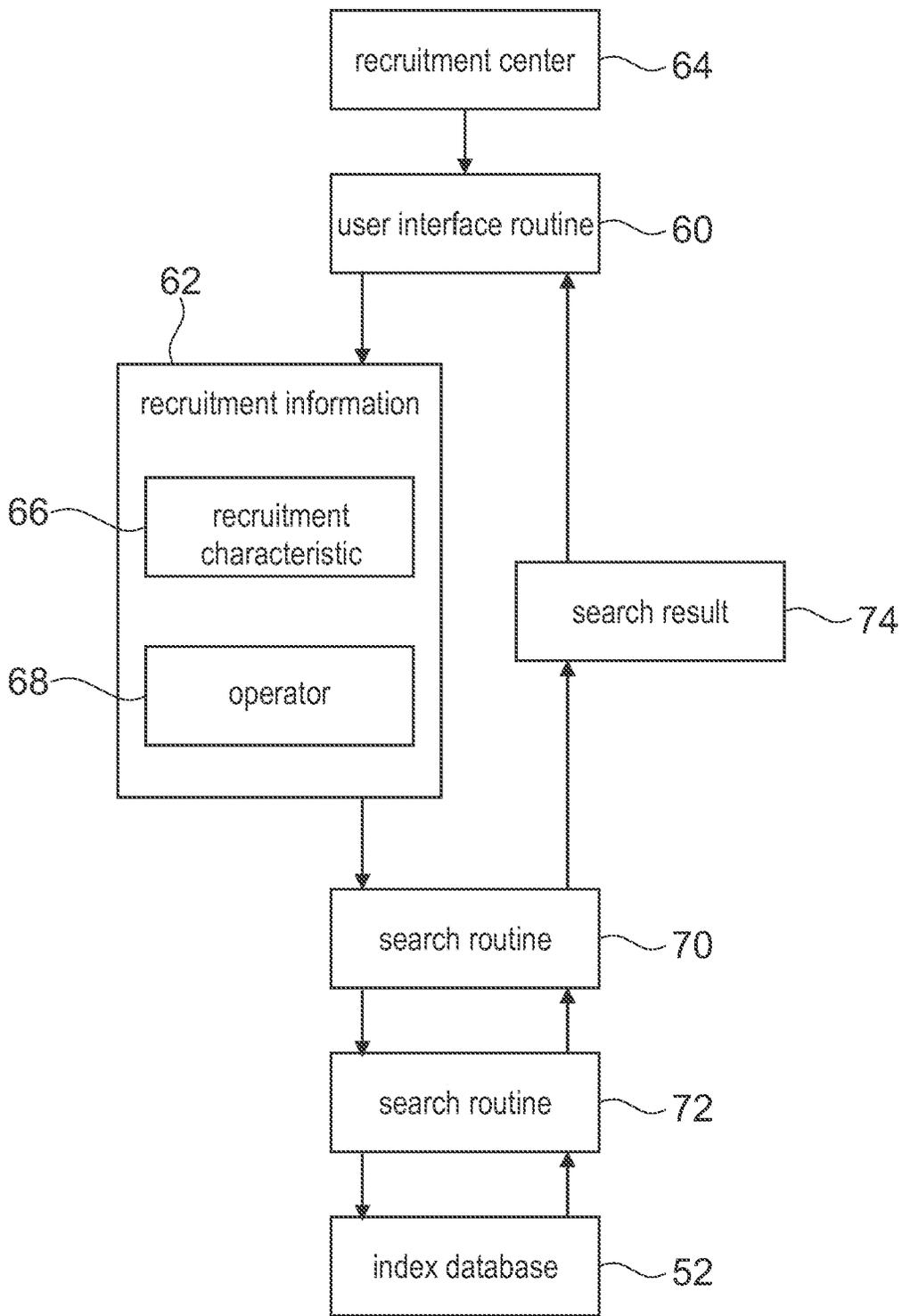


Fig. 3

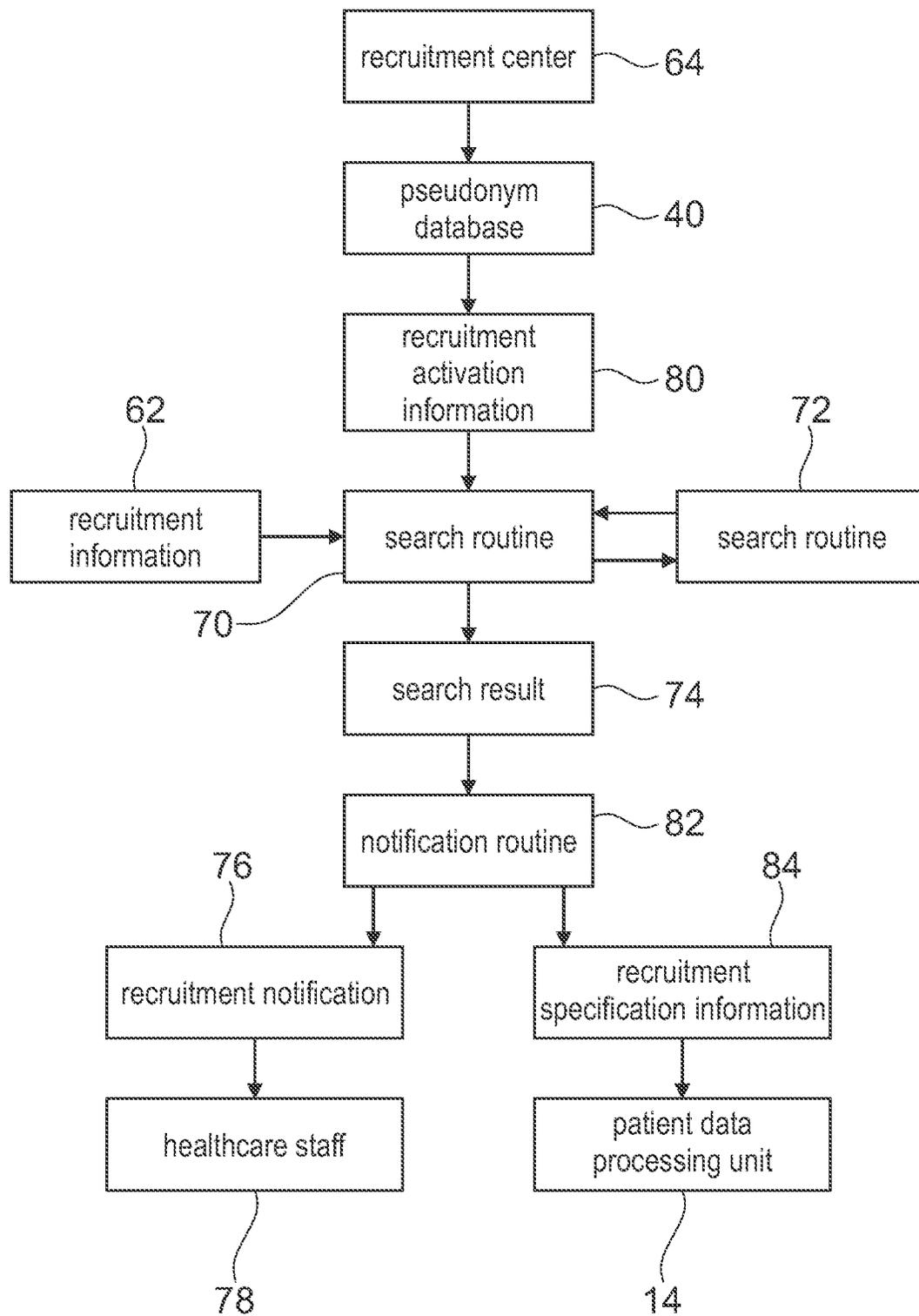


Fig. 4

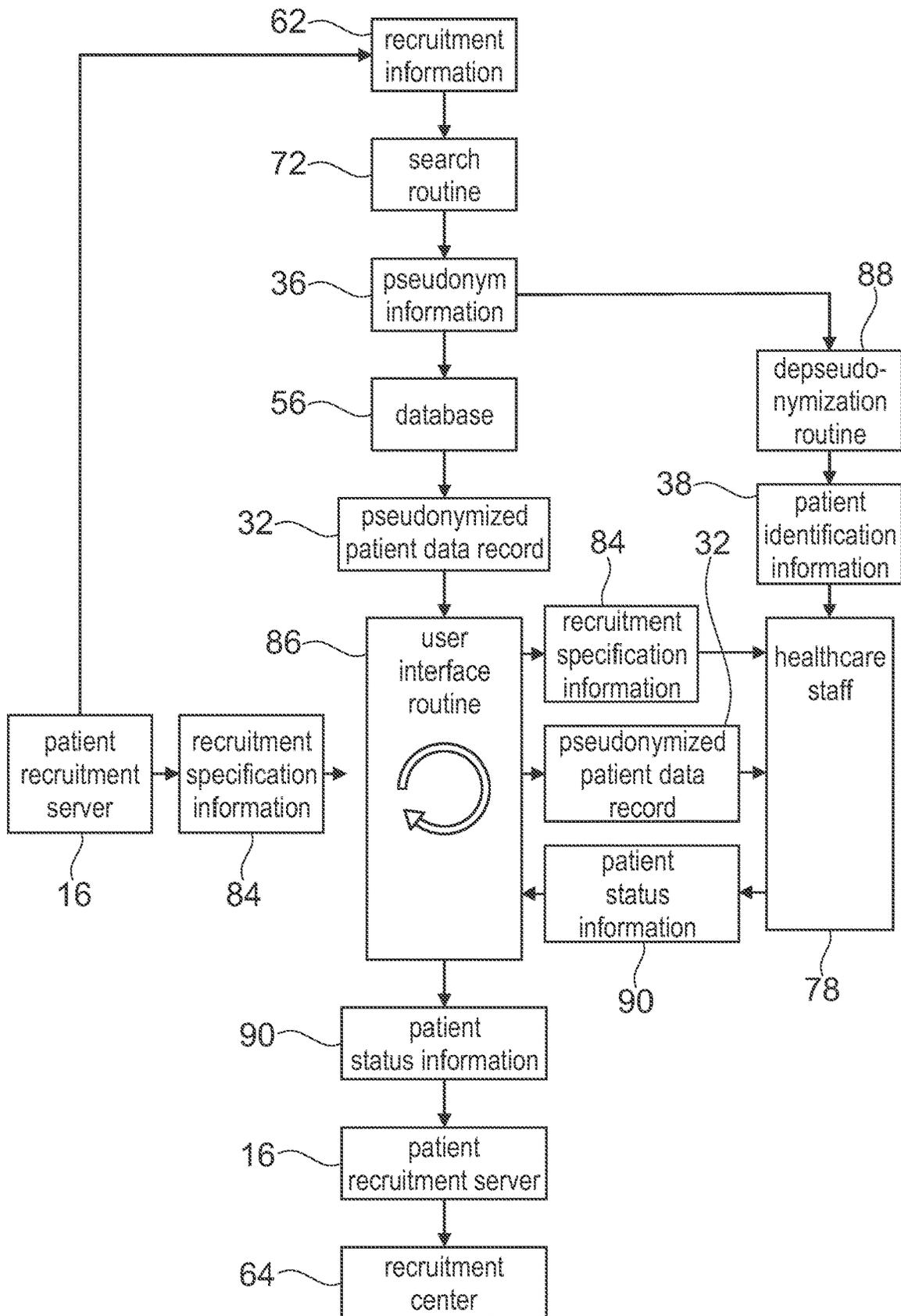


Fig. 5

PATIENT RECRUITMENT SYSTEM AND PATIENT RECRUITMENT METHOD

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a national-stage entry of PCT/EP2015/059415, filed Apr. 29, 2015, which claims priority to German Patent Application No. DE 102014106112.8, filed Apr. 30, 2014, the contents of all of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

STATE OF THE ART

A patient recruitment system with at least one patient recruitment server having at least one search routine has already been proposed, the search routine being provided to search for patient data records on the basis of recruitment characteristics.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to a patient recruitment system, in particular for recruiting patients in the areas of medicine and/or veterinary medicine, having at least one patient recruitment server which comprises at least one search routine provided to search for patient data records on the basis of recruitment characteristics.

It is proposed that the patient recruitment server comprises a notification routine which is provided to dispatch a recruitment notification regarding at least one patient data record found on the basis of the recruitment characteristics.

A “patient recruitment server” is to be understood, in particular, as a server, in particular centrally arranged server, and/or another controlling body, in particular centrally arranged controlling body, which is provided for patient recruitment in a plurality of healthcare institutions, in particular hospitals, and to this purpose, in at least one operating state, in particular on request from a patient data processing unit, transfers encoded search requests to patient data processing units. The patient recruitment server is preferably embodied as a dedicated server but could, as an alternative, also be embodied as a virtual server, as a plurality of distributedly located servers or as a server in a cloud. The patient recruitment server is preferentially situated outside the intranets of respective health information systems, e.g. respective hospital information systems, medical practice information systems, cancer registries or similar systems comprising patient data or patient-related data, of a healthcare institution, in particular of a hospital. The patient recruitment server is preferably provided for recruiting patients for a procedure deemed expedient by a person skilled in the art, advantageously for clinical surveys and/or for an organ transplantation. Preferentially patient data processing units of the patient recruitment system and the patient recruitment server communicate by means of a server-to-server communication deemed expedient by a person skilled in the art. The patient data processing units preferably communicate with the patient recruitment server in an encoded manner, e.g. via a VPN tunnel. A “healthcare information system” is to be understood, in particular, as a data processing system of a healthcare institution, in particular of a hospital, which data processing system is provided to administrate patient data records, in particular electronic patient records, for a use in the and/or by the healthcare institution. The healthcare information system preferably comprises a client-server structure. In particular,

a patient data server of the healthcare information system is provided to dispatch the patient data records to one of the patient data processing units, in particular via an intranet of the healthcare information system. A “search routine” is to be understood, in particular, as a routine which is provided to find such patient data records that contain at least one given recruitment characteristic. The search routine is preferably provided to transmit a recruitment information to at least one unit, in particular the patient data processing units and/or an index database of at least one of the patient data processing units, and to receive a search result, in particular details regarding a frequency of a relevant search request from the patient recruitment server. Advantageously a search result transmitted by the patient data processing units contains, at least in case of extensive requests, in particular extensive requests having a plurality of recruitment characteristics, a respective indication of relevant search criteria and/or recruitment characteristics for each suitable patient and/or patient data record. In particular, the patient recruitment server is provided to generate, on the basis of the search results, an aggregated result and/or an aggregated report, in particular regarding a plurality of patient data records, search runs, queries, recruitment characteristics and sites, and to output these/this in particular via a user interface routine. The term “provided” is to mean, in particular, specifically programmed, designed and/or equipped. By an object being “provided for a specific function” is in particular to be understood that the object fulfills and/or carries out said specific function in at least one application state and/or operating state. By a “patient data record” in particular data are to be understood comprising information on a patient who has at least been examined in a healthcare institution, in particular in a hospital. The patient data records received by the patient data processing units preferably comprise at least portions of electronic patient records of the healthcare information system. A “recruitment characteristic” is intended to mean, in particular, a requirement which is fulfilled by a partial quantity of the patient data records. The recruitment characteristic can include patient data records into the partial quantity or exclude patient data records from the partial quantity. The recruitment characteristic is implemented as a characteristic deemed expedient by a person skilled in the art, e.g. as a minimum age, as a maximum age, as a diagnosis, as a laboratory result, as a sensor value, as a medication and/or as a weight. In particular, the term “search on the basis of recruitment characteristics” is to mean that the search routine is provided to determine the partial quantity of the patient data records which complies with the criteria of the recruitment characteristics. The search routine preferably identifies at least pseudonym information of the patient data records which complies with the criteria of the recruitment characteristics.

A “notification routine” is intended to mean, in particular, a routine which is provided to dispatch an electronic and/or non-electronic message, e.g. a list, an email, a text message and/or a pager message, and/or equivalently to initiate dispatch via a third site. As an alternative or additionally, the notification routine could dispatch a system-internal notification of the patient recruitment system to the healthcare staff. A “patient data record found by means of the recruitment characteristics” is in particular to be understood as a portion of the searched patient data records which meets the requirements defined by the recruitment characteristics. In particular, a “recruitment notification” is to be understood as a notification that at least lets the healthcare staff know that a patient is to be recruited. The recruitment notification preferentially comprises the recruitment information of at

least one patient data record. As an alternative, the recruitment notification could comprise a pseudonymized patient data record.

The implementation of the patient recruitment system according to the invention allows advantageously short-term recruitment at particularly low staff input.

It is further proposed that the search routine is provided to repeatedly search the patient data records on the basis of the recruitment characteristics, thus advantageously allowing new and modified patient data records to be used for recruitment. As an alternative or additionally, the search routine could search solely new and modified patient data records.

Moreover, it is proposed that the notification routine is provided to automatically dispatch the recruitment notification regarding patient data records that have been newly found on the basis of the recruitment characteristics, as a result of which the healthcare staff is advantageously quickly informed of new patients who are suitable for recruitment. In particular, "patient data records that have been newly found" are to be understood as patient data records found in a search run which were not found in a previous search run. In particular, the newly found patient data records may have been added to the searched patient data records recently in between search runs, or may be found for the first time due to a modification of the recruitment information and/or of the recruitment characteristics. "Automatically" is in particular to mean that the notification routine dispatches the recruitment notification independently from the recruitment center. As an alternative, the recruitment notification could be dispatched after clearance by the recruitment center.

It is also proposed that the searched patient data records are implemented as pseudonymized patient data records, as a result of which the patient data may be used for a recruitment, in particular for a clinical survey, in an optimum way without breach of data protection principles. A "pseudonymized patient data record" is to mean a patient data record comprising no information by means of which a patient can be identified in a direct and/or simple manner.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the patient recruitment system has a plurality of distributedly located, in particular institution-internal and/or healthcare institution-internal, patient data processing units which, in at least one operating state, respectively receive patient data records from at least one healthcare information system, in particular a hospital information system, thus allowing for advantageous processing of the patient data records inside the intranets of the healthcare institutions. A "patient data processing unit" is in particular intended to mean a unit which, in at least one operating state, receives and processes patient data records. The patient data processing unit preferably comprises at least one server, particularly preferentially a plurality of servers. In particular, the patient data processing unit is connected, via a communication connection, to a healthcare information system of a healthcare institution, in particular of a hospital. The patient data processing unit is preferably protected against an unauthorized access in particular by means of an IT infrastructure of the healthcare institution, in particular the hospital, and/or advantageously by means of measures integrated in the patient data processing unit. There are preferentially organizational and/or preferably technical provisions installed which ensure that the pseudonymized patient data cannot leave the healthcare institution either. Advantageously each of the patient data processing units is arranged in a local network and/or an intranet, in particular of an IT department, of an institution and/or of a

healthcare institution, in particular a hospital. In particular, patient data and/or patient data records do not leave the local network nor the intranet, as a result of which in particular data protection guidelines, e.g. a control of the patient data and/or patient data records, can be fulfilled. This in particular allows ensuring that the patient recruitment system is only provided with aggregated data, which may in particular be used for a presentation of search results. Preferably each of the patient data processing units is integrated in an intranet of different healthcare institutions.

In a further implementation it is proposed that each of the patient data processing units respectively comprises at least one depseudonymization routine provided to determine at least one patient identification information corresponding to a pseudonym information of the pseudonymized patient data records, thus allowing recruitment under especially effective data protection conditions. By a "depseudonymization routine" in particular a routine is to be understood which is provided to find and in particular output a corresponding patient identification information for a pseudonym information. Preferentially solely the healthcare staff can access the patient identification information determined by the depseudonymization routine. In particular, the recruitment center cannot access the patient identification information determined by the depseudonymization routine. A "patient identification information" is to mean, in particular, an information allowing to deduce an identity of a patient, e.g. a first name, a surname and a birth date. As an alternative or additionally, the patient identification information could comprise an identification information that has been allocated to the patient data record by the healthcare information system, and at least the name of the patient could be identified via the healthcare information system. By a "pseudonym information" in particular an information is to be understood which bijectively identifies a patient data record without allowing conclusions to a patient's identity, e.g. an identification number.

It is moreover proposed that each of the patient data processing units comprises at least one pseudonym administration server which, in at least one operating state, stores the pseudonym information and the corresponding patient identification information, thus allowing particularly efficient protection of the patient identification information. A "pseudonym administration server" is to be understood, in particular, as a server which is provided to allow an allocation of a pseudonym information and a patient identification information. Preferentially a respective pseudonym administration server is allocated to each patient data processing server.

It is also proposed that the recruitment notification comprises at least the pseudonym information and/or the patient identification information, as a result of which the patient who is to be recruited is advantageously identifiable.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the patient data processing units have at least one respective pseudonymization routine, the pseudonymization routines being provided to pseudonymize patient data records received from healthcare information systems, as a result of which only such data leave a control of the healthcare institution in which allocation to a patient is at least substantially made difficult. By a "pseudonymization routine" in particular a routine is to be understood which is provided to remove at least information allowing direct conclusion to a patient's identity, e.g. names, addresses, birth dates and/or insurance numbers, from the patient data record. Preferably the pseudonymization routine removes further data deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, namely data that allow indirect back-referencing

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from the patient data record to the patient's identity and/or are not necessary for patient recruitment. The pseudonymization routine preferably adds a bijective pseudonym information to the patient data record. In particular, the pseudonymization routine can copy and/or modify the information of the received patient data records for generating the pseudonymized patient data records.

It is also proposed that the patient data processing units are provided to output at least the patient identification information to a healthcare staff, as a result of which the patient belonging to a patient data record may be identified by the healthcare staff under advantageous protection against unauthorized access. Preferably the pseudonym administration servers, particularly preferentially the pseudonymization routines of the pseudonym administration servers, are provided to output at least the patient identification information to a healthcare staff.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the patient data processing units have at least one respective user interface routine, the user interface routines being provided to at least partially output at least one of the patient data records to the healthcare staff, thus allowing information advantageous for recruitment to be made available to the healthcare staff in a simple and comfortable manner. The user interface routines preferably output the at least one patient data record depending on the patient identification information and/or on the pseudonym information. The user interface routines preferentially output at least one of the pseudonymized patient data records and/or at least one of the original patient data records. In particular, the term "respective" is to mean, in this context, that the patient data processing units comprise user interface routines which are implemented separate from each other. Preferably the respective user interface routines are only accessible from an intranet of the healthcare information system and/or only after an authentication to the healthcare information system. In particular, the user interface routines each have their own respective authentication routine by means of which the authorized healthcare staff can be authenticated. A "user interface routine" is to be understood, in particular, as a routine which is provided to process data for presentation. The user interface routine is implemented as a routine deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, preferably as an http server. Preferentially the user interface routine dispatches data to a program designed for presentation of the data. The user interface routine is in particular provided to output the data only after an authentication, in particular a user authentication, has been successful. By a "healthcare staff" in particular persons are to be understood who are responsible for care and/or treatment of the patients in a healthcare institution, in particular in a hospital.

It is moreover proposed that the patient data processing units and in particular the user interface units of the patient data processing units are provided to collect at least one patient status information from the healthcare staff, thus allowing a result of the recruitment to be determined in a prompt and simple way. In particular, a "patient status information" is to be understood as an information that describes a status of a patient's recruitment procedure carried out by the healthcare staff. The patient status information preferentially shows status deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, particularly preferentially at least three status, namely advantageously at least the status "intended for recruitment", "not suitable" and "recruited". The patient status information could also show, for example, the status "further verification required" and "recruitment interview not yet done/possible".

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In a further implementation of the invention it is proposed that the pseudonym administration servers, in at least one operating state, dispatch the pseudonymized patient data records, and that the patient data processing servers of the patient data processing units, in at least one operating state, receive the pseudonymized patient data records from the pseudonym administration servers, as a result of which a technical and spatial separation of the pseudonym administration server and the patient data processing server can be achieved, thus allowing an advantageously high level of data safety. The pseudonym administration server and the patient data processing servers preferably communicate solely via the intranet of the respective healthcare information system, in particular in an encoded fashion, e.g. via a VPN tunnel. The pseudonym administration servers and/or the patient data processing servers are preferably embodied as dedicated servers but could also, as an alternative, be embodied as virtual servers or as servers in a cloud, in particular in a cloud of the healthcare information system. In particular, the pseudonym administration server is embodied separate from the patient data processing server, and is connected to the patient data processing server by way of a communication path, in particular by way of the intranet of the healthcare information system. As an alternative, the pseudonym administration server could be integrated in the patient data processing server. Preferably there is a respective pseudonym administration server allocated to each patient data processing server.

It is further proposed that each of the patient data processing units comprises at least one ontology routine provided to standardize at least one ontology of the patient data records, as a result of which patient data records based on different ontologies can advantageously be searched on the basis of one ontology. Preferentially the patient data processing server comprises the ontology routine. As an alternative or in particular additionally, the patient recruitment server could comprise an ontology routine. In this context, an "ontology" is to be understood, in particular, as an in particular explicit formal specification of a conceptualization. The ontology can herein comprise in particular lists, thesauri, instance models and/or preferentially terminologies. An "ontology routine" is to mean, in particular, a routine which is provided to analyze a meaning of the characteristics of the patient data records and to convert these characteristics into characteristics complying with the standardized terminology. The ontology routine is implemented as an ontology routine deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, which is in particular optimized to a medical terminology, e.g. a routine working according to UMLS (Unified Medical Language System) and/or according to the RxNorm. Preferably the ontology routine is provided to classify the characteristics of the patient data records at least according to a standardized target classification of the diseases and/or of the medical products or of similar ontologies. The target classification of the diseases is a target classification deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, advantageously an "ICD" classification, e.g. ICD-10 or future ICD versions. The target classification of the medical products is a classification deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, advantageously an "ATC" classification. The ontology routine in particular recognizes characteristics which have been classified according to a classification that differs from the target classification, e.g. classified according to ICD-9, SNOMED or NDC, and converts this classification into the target classification.

The ontology routine preferentially comprises a linguistics routine. Preferably the ontology routine comprises a

terminologization routine. The linguistics routine is in particular provided to transfer free text into the standardized ontology, in particular into a standardized terminology, thus advantageously allowing characteristics of the standardized patient data records based on the free text to be searched. By a “linguistics routine” in particular a routine is to be understood which is provided to analyze a free text of the patient data records and to assign a meaning to respective characteristics of the free text. The linguistics routine is preferably implemented as a routine deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, particularly advantageously as a “GATE” (General Architecture for Text Engineering) routine, which is in particular optimized to medical data. The term “free text” is to mean, in particular, a text the structure of which is based on the grammar rules of the language used. The terminologization routine is in particular provided to transfer a terminology of the patient data records of at least one of the healthcare information systems into a standardized terminology, thus allowing particularly effective searching of the patient data records. In particular, a “terminologization routine” is to mean a routine which is provided to analyze different terminologies of the patient data records, to assign a meaning to respective characteristics of the patient data records and to translate the characteristics into another, standardized terminology on the basis of their meanings.

It is further proposed that if the patient data processing units have at least one respective database provided to store the pseudonymized patient data records, thus allowing advantageously quick access to the patient data records. Preferentially the patient data processing servers of the patient data processing units each have a database. The term “database” is intended to mean, in particular, a means of the patient recruitment system, which means is provided for storing the patient data records. The database preferably comprises a plurality of tables. The database is embodied as a database deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, e.g. as an SQL database.

It is also proposed that the patient recruitment server comprises at least one user interface routine which is provided to output at least one search result of the search routine to a recruitment center, thus allowing a selection of the recruitment characteristics to be advantageously examined. By a “search result”, in particular information is to be understood which is provided to supply a user with a result of his search. The search result preferably comprises at least the pseudonym information and/or a patient identification information of the found patient data records. Preferentially the search result comprises at least an information about a number of found patient data records. Advantageously the search result comprises the found patient data records. As an alternative or additionally, the search result could comprise links to the found patient data records. Particularly advantageously the search result comprises only data describing the found patient data records, as a result of which an especially high-level data protection may be achieved. A “recruitment center” is to mean, in particular, a user of the patient recruitment system, which user wishes to find patients, in particular for a clinical survey, by means of the patient recruitment system. The term “output” is to mean, in particular, that the recruitment center dispatches the search result to a device which presents the search result to the user.

In an advantageous implementation of the invention it is proposed that the user interface routine of the patient recruitment server is provided to collect a recruitment information from the recruitment center, thus allowing the recruitment center to search the patient data records for a variety of recruitment characteristics in an in particular structurally

simple fashion. In particular, a “recruitment information” is to mean an information indicating that a patient is intended for recruitment. The recruitment center preferably selects such patients from the search result, whom the recruitment center wishes to recruit, in particular for a clinical survey. Preferentially the recruitment information comprises at least the pseudonym information of the patients selected on the basis of their patient data records. As an alternative, the recruitment information could tag the respective pseudonym information.

It is proposed, in a further implementation, that the patient data processing units are provided to search for the pseudonymized patient data records on the basis of recruitment characteristics linked by the recruitment information, thus allowing complex searches in particular in a structurally simple manner. Herein a linkage of the recruitment characteristics by way of the recruitment information may be effected using probability-based algorithms or similar algorithms of machine learning and/or using a fuzzy logic and/or preferably using logical operations, e.g. in particular AND, OR, NOT, SMALLER THAN, GREATER THAN, and/or using brackets, any of which creating a relationship between the recruitment characteristics.

It is further proposed that the user interface routine of the patient recruitment server is provided to output a number of found patient data records for respective ones of the linked recruitment characteristics, thus allowing to advantageously promptly discern which recruitment characteristics restrict the number of found patient data records to what degree. In particular, a “number of found patient data records” is to be understood as an information indicating how many patient data records, in this case for each of the recruitment characteristics respectively, have been found.

Furthermore, it is proposed that each of the patient data processing units has at least one index routine provided for indexing the patient data records, and/or processing for a search, in particular a semantic search, thus allowing especially quick searching in the patient data records. An “index routine” is to mean, in this context, a routine which is provided to generate, regarding the patient data records, an information that is optimized for searching. The index routine is further provided for generating statistics, e.g. regarding a frequency of a recruitment characteristic, in particular of occurring diagnoses, laboratory data, treatments and/or procedures. Preferentially the index routine uses the meanings assigned to the characteristics of the patient data records by the terminologization routine.

It is also proposed that the user interface routine of the patient recruitment server is provided to output a number of found patient data records which originate from one of the healthcare information systems, as a result of which healthcare institutions, in particular hospitals, having a low number of suitable patients may advantageously be identified. The term “which originate from one of the healthcare information systems” is to mean that the user interface routine indicates how many patients come from each of the healthcare institutions operating the healthcare information systems.

In an advantageous implementation of the invention it is proposed that the patient data records comprise biomedical data, medical product data, laboratory data, personal data and/or sensor data, thus allowing particularly accurate selection of the patients. By “biomedical data” in particular data deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art are to be understood which refer to a diagnosis and/or an examination carried out by the healthcare staff, namely advantageously at least symptoms, diagnoses, procedures, treatments, therapy

data and/or genetic data. In particular, “medical product data” are to mean data which describe the medical products with which a patient has been treated, is being treated and/or is to be treated, as in particular medical treatment apparatus, e.g. a treatment with a respiratory machine, and/or advantageously medication. “Laboratory data” are in particular to be understood as data found by a medical laboratory. “Personal data” are to be understood, in particular, as non-medical data describing the patient, e.g. a body size, an age, a sex, a weight and/or other data deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art. “Sensor data” are to mean, in particular, data taken from a patient by a sensor, e.g. an electrocardiogram, a blood pressure, a pulse rate, a blood sugar level, and/or further data deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art.

The invention furthermore relates to a patient recruitment method, in particular with a patient recruitment system according to the invention, wherein patient data records are searched on the basis of recruitment characteristics and a recruitment notification is dispatched when at least one patient data record has been found by means of the recruitment characteristics.

The patient recruitment system according to the invention and the patient recruitment method according to the invention are not intended to be restricted to the application and implementation described above. In particular, the patient recruitment system according to the invention and the patient recruitment method according to the invention may comprise, for achieving a functionality as herein described, a number of respective elements, components and units that differs from the respective numbers herein mentioned.

DRAWING

Further advantages may be gathered from the following description of the drawing. In the drawing an exemplary embodiment of the invention is shown. The drawing, the description and the claims comprise a plurality of features in combination. The person skilled in the art will purposefully also consider said features individually and then combine them in further expedient arrangements.

Shown in:

FIG. 1 is a patient recruitment system according to the invention for implementing a patient recruitment method according to the invention as a schematic image,

FIG. 2 is a pseudonymization of patient data records via the patient recruitment method from FIG. 1,

FIG. 3 is a search of patient data records via the patient recruitment method from FIG. 1,

FIG. 4 is a notification of healthcare staff via the patient recruitment method from FIG. 1, and

FIG. 5 is a recruitment information being collected by the healthcare staff via the patient recruitment method from FIG. 1.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 shows a patient recruitment system 10 according to the invention, for implementing a patient recruitment method according to the invention, which method is described in detail in FIGS. 2 to 5. The patient recruitment system 10 comprises a plurality of patient data processing units 14, which are situated in different hospitals, and at least one patient recruitment server 16. In FIGS. 2 to 5 recruitment of patients by means of one of the patient processing

units 14 is described. Recruitment by means of another one of the patient data processing units 14 is carried out in an equivalent manner.

The patient data processing units 14 receive, in at least one operating state, original patient data records 22 from patient data servers 18 of a healthcare information system 20 of the respective hospitals 12. The patient data servers 18 independently send newly generated and modified patient data records 22 to the patient data processing units 14. The patient data processing units 14 and the patient data servers 18 are connected to each other via an intranet 24 of the healthcare information system 20. The patient data records 22 are embodied as electronic health records. The patient data records 22 comprise biomedical data, medical product data, laboratory data, personal data and/or sensor data.

Each of the patient data processing units has a respective pseudonym administration server 26 and a patient data processing server 28. Transfer routines 30 of the pseudonym administration servers 26 receive, in at least one operating state, the patient data records 22 from the respective patient data servers 18. The pseudonym administration servers 26 are provided to pseudonymize the patient data records 22, thus generating pseudonymized patient data records 32. The pseudonym administration servers 26 forward the pseudonymized patient data records 32 to the patient data processing servers 28.

FIG. 2 shows part of the patient recruitment method, wherein the patient data records 22 of the patient data servers 18 are pseudonymized and a terminology of the patient data records 22 is standardized for indexing. The transfer routines 30 of the pseudonym administration servers 26 demand from the patient data servers 18, in predetermined intervals, at least modified or new ones of the original patient data records 22.

Pseudonymization routines 34 of the pseudonym administration servers 26 are respectively provided to respectively pseudonymize the received original patient data records 22 and to generate the pseudonymized patient data records 32. To this purpose, the pseudonymization routine 34 respectively searches the entire received original patient data record 22 for information by which to directly identify the patient whom the patient data record 22 belongs to. The pseudonymization routine 34 generates the pseudonymized patient data record 32 which does not contain the information mentioned above. The pseudonymization routine 34 comprises self-learning functions provided to remove the information which could directly identify the patient from free text that may be contained.

The pseudonymization routine 34 creates a pseudonym information 36 which bijectively identifies the pseudonymized patient data record 32, and then adds the pseudonym information 36 to the pseudonymized patient data record 32. The pseudonymization routine 34 determines a patient identification information 38 from information by which the patient whom the original patient data record 22 corresponds to is directly identifiable. The patient identification information 38 comprises at least a surname, a first name and advantageously a birthdate of the patient. Hence the patient is bijectively identifiable by means of the patient identification information 38.

The pseudonymization routine 34 stores the pseudonym information 36 and the patient identification information 38, which are assigned to each other, into a pseudonym database 40 of the respective pseudonym administration server 26. The pseudonym database 40 stores the pseudonym information 36 and the patient identification information 38, the one

assigned to the other one. The pseudonym database 40 is specifically protected from unauthorized access.

The pseudonym administration server 26 sends the pseudonymized patient data record 32 to the patient data processing server 28. The pseudonym administration server 26 and the patient data processing server 28 communicate with each other solely via the intranet 24 of the healthcare information system 20. The patient data processing server 28 comprises an ontology routine 42.

The ontology routine 42 is provided to standardize at least one ontology of the pseudonymized patient data records 32 for indexing. As an alternative or additionally, the ontology routine 42 could generate a standardized patient data record. The ontology routine 42 comprises a linguistics routine 44 and a terminologization routine 46. The linguistics routine 44 is provided to analyze the meaning of characteristics of free text contained in the patient data records 32. To this purpose, the linguistics routine 44 comprises a "GATE" instance. From the free text, the linguistics routine 44 determines characteristics encoded according to a system, in particular ICD-10.

The terminologization routine 46 is provided to transfer a terminology of the characteristics of the patient data records 32 into a standardized terminology. The original patient data records 22 of the different healthcare information systems 20 may comprise characteristics which are encoded following different systems. The terminologization routine 46 comprises instances of transfer libraries deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, which instances translate the differently encoded characteristics into identically encoded characteristics. In the present case, the terminologization routine 46 comprises at least a UMLS instance and an RxNorm instance.

The ontology routine 42 is further provided to find further characteristics, deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, regarding the patient data records 32, e.g. information about the hospital 12 and/or quality information, in particular on terminologization. Moreover, self-learning functions could be applied for finding such characteristics.

The patient data processing server 28 comprises an index routine 48 which is provided for indexing the characteristics found by the ontology routine 42. The index routine 48 stores an index information 50 with the indexed characteristics in an index database 52 of the patient data processing server 28.

The patient data processing server 28 comprises a database routine 54 which is provided to store the pseudonymized patient data records 32. The database routine 54 stores the pseudonymized patient data records 32 in a database 56 of the patient data processing server 28. Each index information 50 contains a link to one of the pseudonymized patient data records 32 in the database 56.

The patient recruitment server 16 is located in a place different from the patient data processing units 14. In the present case, the patient data processing units 14 and the patient recruitment server 16 are connected to each other by means of an encoded connection via the Internet 58, namely via a VPN tunnel.

As shown in FIG. 3, the patient recruitment server 16 comprises a user interface routine 60, which is provided to supply users of the patient recruitment system 10 with information and to collect information from the users. In the present case, the user interface routine 60 comprises an HTML server. As an alternative, any other server type is conceivable. The user interface routine 60 could also be implemented as a server of a server-client structure, wherein programs of the patient recruitment system 10 installed and

executed on the users' computers output the information to the users and collect information from the users.

The user interface routine 60 of the patient recruitment server 16 is provided to collect a recruitment information 62 from the user, who is embodied as a recruitment center 64. The recruitment center 64 consists, for example, of representatives of a pharmaceutical company wishing to carry out a clinical survey, of doctors who carry out the clinical survey and possibly of expert operatives of the patient recruitment system 10. For the clinical survey the recruitment center 64 is looking for suitable patients whom the recruitment center 64 wishes to recruit for carrying out the survey.

The recruitment information 62 comprises recruitment characteristics 66 and operators 68. The operators 68 logically link the recruitment characteristics 66 with each other. Recruitment characteristics 66 linked by the operators 68 may be grouped, for example, using brackets. Thus any type of logical term may be created from the recruitment characteristics 66. Entry of the recruitment information 62 is made in a text-based manner and is checked and implemented by means of a formula analyzer. As an alternative or additionally, an entry of the recruitment information 62 could also be made graphically.

The recruitment characteristics 66 may comprise biomedical data, medical product data, laboratory data, personal data and/or sensor data. The recruitment characteristics 66 are at least selectable from a quantity of encoded characteristics available with standardization of the patient data records 32. Moreover, value ranges may be determined by the recruitment characteristics 66 and the operators 68. The recruitment characteristics 66 may also comprise free search terms for which the free text of the patient data records 22 is searched.

The patient recruitment server 16 comprises a search routine 70 which is provided to search pseudonymized patient data records 32 by means of the index information 50 of the index database 52 of the patient data processing units 14 on the basis of the recruitment information 62. The search routine 70 of the patient recruitment server 16 dispatches at least the recruitment information 62 to search routines 72 of the patient data processing units 14. The search routines 72 of the patient data processing units 14 search the index databases 52 of the patient data processing units 14 on the basis of the recruitment information 62. The patient data processing unit 14 which the recruitment information 62 is sent to as well as the patient data processing unit 14 which carries out a search by means of the recruitment information 62 is respectively adjustable. The search routine 72 generates a search result 74 and dispatches the search result 74 to the patient recruitment server 16.

The search result 74 comprises at least an information about a number of found patient data records 32. The search result 74 also comprises a number of found patient data records 32 itemized for each of the recruitment characteristics 66 and in particular for grouped recruitment characteristics 66. The search result 74 moreover comprises a number of found patient data records 32 itemized for each of the hospitals 12. Furthermore, the search result 74 could comprise further information deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art as regards the found patient data records 32 and/or at least portions of the found patient data records 32. The search result 74 further comprises the pseudonym information 36 of the found patient data records 32. In particular, the search result 74 comprises no information suitable for directly identifying a patient whom one of the found patient data records 32 is allocated to.

The user interface routine **60** is provided to output the search result **74** of the search routine **70** to the recruitment center **64**. Herein the user interface routine **60** outputs the number of found patient data records **32** for respective ones of the logically linked recruitment characteristics **66** and for a number of found patient data records **32** which originate from one of the healthcare information systems **20**.

As shown in FIG. **4**, the patient recruitment server **16** is provided to dispatch a recruitment notification **76** to a healthcare staff **78** of the hospitals **12**. The user interface routine **60** is provided to record a recruitment activation information **80** from the recruitment center **64**. The recruitment activation information **80** activates a recruitment for a new recruitment information or advantageously for a recruitment information **62** stored by the search routines **72** of the patient data processing units **14**. The search routines **72** of the patient data processing units **14** search the index database **52**, on the basis of the recruitment information **62**, for corresponding patient data records **32**. The search results **74** of the search are forwarded to a notification routine **82** of the patient recruitment server **16** by the search routine **72**. The search result **74** herein comprises an information which describes how to contact the healthcare staff **78**.

The search routines **72** of the patient data processing units **14** repeatedly carry out the search on the basis of the recruitment information **62**, in the present case in an interval that is determinable by the recruitment center **64**. As an alternative, the search routine **72** could search only new and modified patient data records **32**.

The notification routine **82** dispatches a recruitment notification **76** regarding the patient data records **32** listed in the search result **74** to healthcare staff **78** of the respective hospital **12**, in this case as a push message. The patient recruitment server **16** dispatches a recruitment notification **76** to a receiving device that is individually assigned to a person of the healthcare staff **78**, in the present case to a pager and/or a mobile phone. The recruitment notification **76** at least indicates that a patient data record **32** corresponding to a patient under treatment in the hospital **12** has been found by means of the recruitment information **62**. The recruitment notification **76** could comprise information deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art, e.g. the pseudonym information **36** and/or a number of found patient data records **32**. The notification routine **82** is provided to automatically dispatch recruitment notifications **76** regarding patient data records **32** newly found by means of the recruitment information **62** to the healthcare staff **78**. As an alternative to the patient recruitment server **16**, the patient data processing unit **14** could comprise the notification routine **82**.

The notification routine **82** is further provided to dispatch a recruitment specification information **84** to the patient data processing unit **14**. The recruitment specification information **84** contains details on a procedure for which the patient is to be recruited, in particular on risks of the procedure and/or on necessary requirements for participation in the procedure.

As shown in FIG. **5**, the patient data processing unit **14** receives the recruitment information **62**. The search routine **72** of the patient data processing unit **14** identifies the pseudonym information **36** corresponding to the recruitment information **62**. As described regarding FIG. **4**, the patient recruitment server **16** dispatches the recruitment notification **76** to the healthcare staff **78**. The database **56** identifies the patient data records **32** corresponding to the pseudonym information **36** and makes them available to a user interface

routine **86** of the patient data processing unit **14**, in this case of the patient data processing server **28**.

The pseudonym administration server **26** comprises a depseudonymization routine **88** which is provided to determine at least the patient identification information **38** corresponding to the pseudonym information **36** of the pseudonymized patient data records **32**. The depseudonymization routine **88** retrieves the patient identification information **38** corresponding to the pseudonym information **36** from the pseudonym database **40**. The depseudonymization routine **88** has an interface which is provided to output the patient identification information **38** to the healthcare staff **78**. The interface of the depseudonymization routine **88** is in this case embodied as an http server. The interface is protected against unauthorized access.

The user interface routine **86** of the patient data processing server **28** is provided to output the patient identification information **38** to the healthcare staff **78**. Moreover, the user interface routine **86** is provided to output the pseudonymized patient data records **32** to the healthcare staff **78**. The user interface routine **86** could also be provided to output the original patient data records **22** to the healthcare staff **78**. Furthermore, the user interface routine **86** is provided to output the recruitment specification information **84** to the healthcare staff **78**. This information allows the healthcare staff to verify the recruitment and to carry out a recruitment interview.

The user interface routine **86** is implemented as an http server. However, as an alternative, any other server types are conceivable. The healthcare staff **78** accesses a website supplied by the user interface routine **86**. The website comprises a function for authentication of the healthcare staff **78**. From a computer of the healthcare staff **78**, the website retrieves the patient identification information **38** from the depseudonymization routine **88** of the pseudonym administration server **26**.

The healthcare staff **78** carries out the recruitment interview with the patient. The details thereto required are gathered by the healthcare staff **78** from the recruitment specification information **84**. The healthcare staff **78** also carries out, if the patient agrees and if applicable, further examination of the patient, according to the information gathered from the recruitment specification information **84**. The healthcare staff **78** ascertains if the patient agrees to the recruitment, if he is suitable for the recruitment or unsuitable for the recruitment.

The user interface routine **86** of the patient data processing server **28** collects a patient status information **90** from the healthcare staff **78**, which at least specifies if the patient agrees to the recruitment, is suitable for the recruitment or unsuitable for the recruitment. The patient status information **90** also comprises information on the further examinations of the patient. The patient data processing units **14** send the patient status information **90** to the patient recruitment server **16**. The user interface routine **60** of the patient recruitment server **16** outputs the patient status information **90** to the recruitment center **64**.

The patient recruitment server **16** has an administration interface **92**. An administrator **94** can configure access possibilities of the plurality of recruitment centers **64** and of the healthcare staff **78** by way of the administration interface **92**. Furthermore, the administrator **94** can modify other configurations of the patient recruitment system **10**, which are deemed expedient by the person skilled in the art. The administration interface **92** may be embodied at least partially together with the user interface routine **60**.

The invention claimed is:

1. A patient recruitment system comprising:

- A) at least one patient recruitment server,
- a) being arranged outside intranets of healthcare information systems of healthcare institutions with the healthcare information systems comprising patient data or patient-related data;
- b) comprising at least one search routine configured to dispatch at least a recruitment information comprising recruitment characteristics and to generate search results;
- c) comprising at least one user interface routine which is configured to output the search results of the search routine of the patient recruitment server to a recruitment center;
- B) more than one patient data processors, each of which
- d) being arranged in an intranet of an IT department of a different healthcare institution and located in a place different from the location of the patient recruitment server;
- e) being only connected via the Internet with the patient recruitment server;
- f) only communicating in an encoded manner with the patient recruitment server;
- g) being configured to receive and process patient data records from the healthcare information system of the healthcare institution where the respective patient data processor is located;
- h) being configured to process the patient data records inside the intranet of the healthcare institution where the respective patient data processor is located;
- i) comprising a pseudonymization routine, being configured to pseudonymize the patient data records received from the healthcare information system of the healthcare institution where the respective patient data processor is located at, and thereby create the pseudonymized patient data records;
- j) comprising at least one patient data processing server, which comprises one or more databases exclusively for storing pseudonymized patient data records,
- k) comprising at least one pseudonym administration server, being configured to store a pseudonym information, which bijectively identifies a patient data record without allowing conclusions to a patient's identity, store the corresponding patient identification information, and dispatch the pseudonymized patient data records within the patient data processor to be received by the at least one patient data processing server of the respective patient data processor, and
- l) comprising an individual search routine, being configured to receive the recruitment information comprising the recruitment characteristics from the search routine of the patient recruitment server, and search the databases of the patient data processing server of the respective healthcare institution on the basis of the recruitment information received from the patient recruitment server,
- wherein the patient data records that are searched by the individual search routines of the patient data processors are implemented as the pseudonymized patient data records, which are stored in the different

databases of the patient data processing servers of each of the respective patient data processors of the different healthcare institutions,

wherein each of the individual search routines of the patient data processors are configured to generate search results for each of the healthcare institutions individually,

wherein each of the individual search routines of the patient data processors are configured to dispatch the search results to the patient recruitment server, and wherein the output search results comprise at least a number of found patient data records but comprise no information suitable for directly identifying a patient whom one of the found patient data records is allocated to.

2. The patient recruitment system according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of patient data processors have at least one respective user interface routine provided to at least partially output at least one of the patient data records to the healthcare staff.

3. The patient recruitment system according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of patient data processors are provided to collect at least one patient status information from the healthcare staff.

4. The patient recruitment system according to claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of patient data processors comprises at least one respective ontology routine provided to standardize at least one ontology of the patient data records.

5. The patient recruitment system according to claim 1, wherein the user interface routine of the patient recruitment server is provided to collect a recruitment information from the recruitment center.

6. The patient recruitment system according to claim 1, wherein the user interface routine of the patient recruitment server is provided to output a number of found patient data records which originate from one of the healthcare information systems.

7. The patient recruitment system according to claim 1, wherein the patient data records comprise biomedical data, medical product data, laboratory data, personal data or sensor data.

8. The patient recruitment system according to claim 1, wherein the pseudonymization routine comprises self-learning functions provided to remove information from patient data records, which could identify the patients from free text contained within the patient data records.

9. A patient recruitment method, with at least one patient recruitment server, which is arranged outside intranets of healthcare information systems of healthcare institutions, with the healthcare information systems comprising patient data records or patient-related data;

and more than one patient data processor, each of which is arranged in an intranet of an IT department of a different healthcare institution, located in a place different from the location of the patient recruitment server, only connected via the Internet with the patient recruitment server, only communicating in an encoded manner with the patient recruitment server, and comprising at least one patient data processing server with at least one database for storing pseudonymized patient data records,

the patient recruitment method comprising the steps of:
 each of the patient data processors receiving and process-
 ing the patient data records from the healthcare infor-
 mation system of the healthcare institution where the
 respective patient data processor is located, wherein
 each of the patient data processors processes the patient
 data records only inside the intranet of the healthcare
 institution where the respective patient data processor
 is located;
 pseudonymization routines of the respective patient data
 processors pseudonymizing the patient data records
 received from the healthcare information system of the
 healthcare institution where the respective patient data
 processor is located at, and thereby creating the pseud-
 onymized patient data records,
 pseudonym administration servers of the respective
 patient data processors storing a pseudonym informa-
 tion, which bijectively identifies a patient data record
 without allowing conclusions to a patient's identity,
 storing the corresponding patient identification infor-
 mation, and dispatching the pseudonymized patient
 data records within the patient data processor to be
 received by the at least one patient data processing
 server of the respective patient data processor,
 the at least one database of the respective patient data
 processing server storing the received pseudonymized
 patient data records,
 at least one search routine of the at least one patient
 recruitment server dispatching at least a recruitment
 information comprising recruitment characteristics to

individual search routines of several patient data pro-
 cessors of the patient recruitment system,
 the individual search routines of the patient data proces-
 sors searching the databases for storing pseudonymized
 patient data records of the patient data processing
 servers of each of the respective patient data processors
 from different healthcare institutions on the basis of the
 recruitment information received from the patient
 recruitment server, wherein the patient data records that
 are searched by the individual search routines of the
 patient data processors are implemented as the pseud-
 onymized patient data records, which are stored in the
 databases for storing pseudonymized patient data
 records of the patient data processing servers of each of
 the respective patient data processors of the different
 healthcare institutions,
 the individual search routines of the patient data proces-
 sors generating generates search results for each of the
 healthcare institutions individually, and
 the individual search routines of the patient data proces-
 sors dispatching the search results to the patient recruit-
 ment server, wherein the dispatched search results
 comprise at least a number of found patient data
 records but comprise no information suitable for
 directly identifying a patient whom one of the found
 patient data records is allocated to
 at least one user interface routine of the patient recruit-
 ment server outputting the received search results of the
 individual search routines of the patient recruitment
 server to a recruitment center.

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